



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Aviation
Administration

OCT 26 2010

Office of the Administrator

800 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20591

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Waxman:

Thank you for your September 20 letter, cosigned by Congresswoman Jane Harman, about the recent Federal Aviation Administration 250-degree departure heading test for piston-powered aircraft at Santa Monica Airport (SMO).

Our primary mission is to provide a safe, orderly, and expeditious flow of air traffic. Within this context, we strive to use the best airport configuration to meet the constant demand placed on the airport by its customers. It is a continuing challenge for the FAA to provide the necessary support to the National Airspace System and ensure the consideration of impacts on the community.

As you already know, the 250-degree departure heading test was initiated in an attempt to enhance flight safety and reduce departure delays for SMO and nearby Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). We are still in the process of analyzing the test results, and we expect to be finished by the end of the year. Preliminary results have been promising, with a significant reduction in delays at both SMO and LAX. After we have completed a thorough evaluation of all the results, including a review by FAA environmental specialists, management within our Air Traffic Organization will make a recommendation regarding permanent implementation of the 250-degree heading. If the recommendation is to make the procedure permanent, we will move forward with any necessary environmental assessment. In addition, we will initiate public outreach to explain the test results and address the concerns of affected homeowners.

We have sent an identical letter to Congresswoman Harman.

If I can be of further assistance, please contact me or Roderick D. Hall, Assistant Administrator for Government and Industry Affairs, at (202) 267-3277.

Sincerely,

J. Randolph Babbitt
Administrator